



RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN THE POETRY OF SHAH ABDUL LATIF BHITTAI

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ABSTRACT:

To interpret religion is not the responsibility of common people but they do not give up and illustrate it in their own methods. Because every man has a different approach to understanding the religion and its interpretation due to the distinctive faith and belief they belong to. Hence, it cannot be said that once's elucidation of religion is true and other's is untrue furthermore, once belief never be applied on other either by force or implementation. There are two major classes of people who interpret the religion in their own methods, one is the religious scholars who have different approaches to understand and address the religion and they stress more on the ceremonial practices of religion like fasting and praying only. However, the second class is of Sufi saints, whose analysing and comprehension of religion is contrary is that of religious scholars and they emphasize more on spiritual development rather than ritual deeds. Similarly, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai is one of the greatest poets of Sindh, Pakistan whose poetry is acknowledged throughout the world and his way of practice and interpretation of religion is uniqueness. This dissertation will try to understand, how Shah Latif addresses the religion through his poetry and how he deals with other religion. What are the implications of Shah Latif's poetry in the present day, weather its applicable or not in modern age.

KEYWORDS:

SHAH ABDUL LATIF BHITTAI, RELIGION, POETRY, SINDHI SOCIETY, RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS.

INTRODUCTION

To understand religion, it is an excessively perilous assignment to illustrate religion. The different people have distinctive approaches to examine the religion thus, it varies from region to region because it concerns the beliefs, faiths, practices, devotion, and more but the central assurance is in God or a supernatural force. There is diversity between the religion and religions, although, religion is the foundation of the parent religions. The illustration of one's religion cannot be applied to the illustration of other religions, and no religion can be segregated from other religion. Therefore, religion and belief are indistinguishable (Howerth, 1903). Moreover, it can be assumed that all the religions are an offshoot of one tree hence, the term religion is extremely vague to define because people die to avert their religion according to their beliefs (Idinopulos, 1998). As we go into depth in the religions, we discover more diversity among them.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai¹ (1689-1751) was one of the great Sufi saint, poet, scholar and humanist of Subcontinent, who transferred his religious message throughout his poetry. He lived during the Mughal empire in the reign of Aurangzeb² (d. 1707) and he intensely observed the declination of the Mughal empire. Sindh³

was under the rule of the Kalhora family⁴ (Verma, 2016) in Shah's time. During this period, Sufi Shah Inayat Shaheed martyred while resisting the brutal rulers, as well as this period was perceived as religious hierarchical in which the Pirs⁵, Sayyids⁶, Zamindars⁷, Pirzads⁸, etc. had supremacy over Sindhi society (Sorley, 1940). Therefore, it was rather difficult to promote the true principles of religion in Sindhi society where the religious orthodox had patronage by the state. But like the other Sufi saints, Shah Latif addresses the masses about the true concept of religion through his poetry instead of emphasizing only on ritual practices as do by conservative Muslims.

There are several assumptions by distinctive scholars regarding the religious vision of Shah Latif because the poetry of Shah Latif is totally based on love, peace, struggle, and human equality and does not have focus on the exhibition of worship to God. Because he knew that the progress of humankind is more necessary to accede to God by offering ritual practices. Consequently, the poet did not reveal his creed or sect to the people because his only mission was human prosperity. Even Shah Latif used the

⁴ The first native Sindhi rulers who established the autonomous state of Sindh.

⁵ A Muslim saint or holly man

⁶ Respected caste of Muslim community

⁷ Landlords

⁸ Influential people

¹ A sufi mystic of 18th century and the national poet of Sindh

² the last great Mughal emperor

³ A province of Pakistan

word Islam once in his whole poetry. He neither visited any sacred places of Islam (Makah and Madinah) nor praised any Pir, ruler, or feudal, etc. (Abbasi, 1987). In fact, Shah Latif's religion was Islam, but the fundamental values of all religions were also existed in his notions as well as his views not at all as communal or narrow-minded. He depicts both Muslims and non-Muslims in his poetry moreover, he traveled with Yogis and Sanyasis for three years (Jotwani, 1963). Obviously, Shah Latif belongs to a Sayyid family⁹ and intuitively respected the ritual practices of Islam as well as he recognized all the religions are true and honorable.

Pakistani society is divided into several religious sects and the people are perplexed that who should they follow thus, several religious parties or sects proclaim that they are on the right path and the rest are in the wrong direction as well as they criticize each other. So, it is necessary to explore the message of Shah Latif about religion and how does he think about the Islamic teachings as well as to observe the other religions, particularly Hinduism. The present study will attempt to analyze the religious ideas of Shah Latif which he has portered in *Shah-Jo-Risalo*¹⁰.

1.1 SIGNIFICANT OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to explore the religious vision of Shah Latif as well as to evaluate how Shah Latif pursue the religion. The study will scrutinize how religion was being exercised by religious scholars and its repercussion in Sindhi society as well as on Shah Latif's life. Furthermore, the *Piri-Murudi*¹¹ system was at its peak during Shah Latif's era, and the religious leaders had auspices from the state even, the rulers of the Kalhora family were too the spiritual leaders of that time. Moreover, the renowned religious assassination of Sufi Shah Inayat Shaheed (d. 1718) and Makhdoom Abdul Rahman (d. 1732) happened in this period. Therefore, in such a condition it was much perilous to interpret the true concept of religion. The present-day of Sindhi society is not much distinct as observed in Shah's period in the sense of religious superiority, where the *Pir's* or spiritual leaders are still dominated over Sindh. Therefore, it is indispensable to prevent the manipulation of religious narrow-minded by following the message of a great poet, Shah Latif. Thus, this research will analyse how Shah Latif deals with religion and religious elites.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Keeping in view that the mystics and religious scholars always have clashes regarding the interpretations and practices of religion. Meanwhile, religious leaders had enjoyed the key position in the Kalhora dynasty during Shah Latif's period. Thus, Shah Latif and religious conservatives of that era endeavoured to illustrate the true principles of Islam in distinctive ways. Therefore, the main question of the study is to understand how Shah Latif addresses the religion in his poetry.

1.2.1 SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS:

- How did religious scholars exercise the religion during Shah Latif's era?
- What was the relation between religious scholars and the state?
- How did Shah Latif inscribe the traditional scholars in his poetry?
- What is the influence of Shah Latif's religious vision on Sindhi society?

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The exploratory as well as qualitative research is applied to address the research questions for this study. Thus, there are different types of methods to analyse the data collection but in social sciences the exclusive method is content analysis in both qualitative as well as quantitative research methodologies (Bengtsson, 2015). In qualitative research methodology the content analysis is exceptionally appropriate technique to understand the human thoughts, feelings and behaviours either these are in written or practical form. The content analysis is used to explore the data existing in the form written, spoken or cultural artifacts like, audio, video picture, drawing etc. There are two types of content analysis: conceptual and relational content analysis. The conceptual content analysis is used to identify the existence and frequency of a concept is used in the text. Whereas the relational content analysis examines how the different thoughts or concepts related to each other as well as to investigate the acknowledgment of the people to these concepts (Reis, 2021). Therefore, both types of content analysis will be applied to address the research questions. Because Shah Latif has used distinct concepts in his poetry to interpret the spirit of religion. Thus, to examine the feedback of the people towards the message of Shah Latif will be evaluate by using relational content analysis. Moreover, both primary and secondary data sources are assessed to understand the nature of the topic. The primary source is adopted from the *'Shah-Jo- Risalo*¹² and the secondary source is taken from different books, journal articles, and research papers.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

It is necessary to distinguish the previous works on Shah Latif's life, work, and poetry. Before the conquest of Sindh (1843) by the Britishers, Shah Latif was an unexplored personality though, no work had been published on the poet till the mid of nineteenth century. Almost after a century of the poet's death, it was an English scholar named Richard F. Burton who first introduced the great poet through his book; *Sindh, and the Races that the Inhabit the Valley of the Indus* (1851). Burton explored the poet to compare with Ibn Farazi of Arab and Hafiz Sa'adi of Persian (Burton, 1851). Thus, the seven more renowned works had been published on the life, work, and poetry of

⁹ Respected caste of Muslim community

¹⁰ A collection of Shah Latif's poetry

¹¹ Master and Disciple

¹² The collection of Shah Latif's poetry

Shah Latif in the second half of the nineteenth century. These seven works are: *Sasui* (1863) by F. J. Goldsmith, *Shah-Jo-Risalo* (the first printed book on Shah Latif's poetry) published by Dr Ernest Trumpp from Leipzig, Germany in 1866, *Life of Shah Abdul Latif* (1870) by W. Southey, *Something about Sindh* (1882) by G. Sigma, *Life of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai* (1877) by Mirza Qaleech Baig, *The Life, Religion and Poetry of Shah Abdul Latif* (1890) by Lilaram Watanmal Lalwani and last but not least *Notes on Risalo* (1895) by Jhamatal Vasvani.

In the twentieth century, there are several numbers of books, gazetteers, research articles, and doctoral theses have published at the national and international level on the study of Shah Latif and these works cannot be discussed in this limited section because it requires a separate section to elaborate each. However, the renowned works are the thesis of H.T. Sorley entitled *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit* that was published in 1940 from Karachi, another notable work of Dr Annemarie Schimmel of *Pain and Grace* (1976) occupied creditable efforts in the study of Shah Latif and his work. Furthermore, the different scholars and authors like, G. M. Sayyid, G. Allana, Shaikh Ayaz, Agha Saleem, Agha Yakub, Dr N. A. Baloch, Deen Muhammad Wafai, Rasheed Bhatti, Tanveer Abbasi, and more have worked on Latifiyat¹³ as well as the translation of *Shah-Jo-Risalo* in different languages.

2. RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF SHAH ABDUL LATIF BHITTAI

Man is known by his character either he belongs to any creed or faith, his behaviour reveals his belief. However, it is not easy to declare someone as righteous or pious only by observing his visible deeds. Only God knows the secrets of the heart. Thus, there are several assertions of distinctive scholars of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai regarding the religious thought of Shah Latif. Because Shah Latif had a company of non-Muslims and he spent several years of his determinative life along with them and visited their sacred places. It is the unique quality of Sufis who are not limited to the sole rapprochement of their own religion, but their approach is wide. They welcome all the people of different walks of life whether they belong to their faith or not. Alike, the doors of Shah Latif had always opened for all the people. Due to his broad-minded and liberal understanding towards the different faiths, the people of different religions or sects, near and far attracted to his circle. However, the central ideas of all Sufis are the same to get the will of Allah. In fact, this reason became the cause of the spreading of Islam in the sub-continent.

The religion of Shah Latif was a kind of amalgamation of fundamental and real Islamic beliefs. He neither crossed the limit of any such faith nor criticized to other creeds. Thus, he had a unique rapprochement to the religion, he was not such those Sufis like Mansoor Al Hallaj (d. 922) and Sarmad Kashani (d.1661), who raised the slogan of '*Anal Haq*' which would not be approachable for common

masses or religious elites. The religious thought of Shah Latif had two features before the ordinary people, but his central aim was the prosperity of human beings whether he or she belongs to any creed, faith, or color. In the first aspect, he was from the Sayyid family¹⁴ and descendant of great mystic poet Shah Abdul Karim of Bulri (d. 1623). He followed the Sharia¹⁵ by performing the prayers, fasting in the holy month of Ramadan, and remembering to Allah Almighty by prayer beads. He used to recite the holy Quran by comprehension, and he always kept it with him. He used to spend alone for the sake of absolute truth and remembering the Creator. These arguments reveal that Shah Latif was proved himself as a true Muslim by exercising these deeds. However, on the other side, Shah Latif spent some years along with his non-Muslim companions of Jogi and Sannyasin through traveling (Mirza K. F., 1980) moreover, he complimented the straightforwardness. The poet also discussed them in his two surs¹⁶ Khahori and Ramkaly. Shah Latif used to visit the sacred palaces of Hindus, too, along with his Jogi companions.

2.1 RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN SHAH-JO-RISALO

It was first time a German scholar named Ernest Trumpp, a British servant in Subcontinent who comprehensively understood the Indian languages like, Sindhi, Pashto, Punjabi and Brahui. During his stay in Sindh, he studied Shah Latif's collection and after his retirement he compiled the collection of Shah's work and published it in 1866 from Leipzig, Germany. He gave the title of '*Shah-Jo-Risalo*' to the collection of Shah's poetry. He was the first who introduced Shah Latif to the world, but he could not publish the whole work of Shah Latif. Thus, there were a few surs¹⁷ like, Marvi, Karayal, Purb, and Kamode were excluded from the publication of *Shah-Jo-Risalo*. Trumpp also chapterized the collection of Shah's poetry and this first edition was called Trumpp's edition. Thereafter Ernest Trumpp, Qazi Ibrahim was the second who published *Shah-Jo-Risalo* in 1867 from Bombay (Agha, 1985), and this edition is known as the 'Bombay edition'.

Afterward, several distinguished scholars like, Ghulam Muhammad Shahwani and Kalyan Advani were published *Shah-Jo-Risalo* in 1950 and 1958 respectively. There are some other prominent scholars who compiled *Shah-Jo-Risalo* and published it, in which H. T. Sorley, Allama I. I. Qazi, N. A. Baloch, etc. are salient scholars (Agha, 1985). Hence, due to different research methodologies of distinctive scholars to compile the message of Shah Latif in the form of *Shah-Jo-Risalo*. Some scholars have included some chapters or verses in their editions whereas other scholars have excluded some chapters or verses from their editions by arguing that these chapters or verses are alien or not from Shah's

¹⁴ Respected caste of Muslim community

¹⁵ The Divine laws

¹⁶ Chapters of *Shah-Jo-Risalo*

¹⁷ Chapters of *Shah-Jo-Risalo*

¹³ Study of Shah Latif

sayings. Similarly, some editions have more verses or poems, and some have less but most of the scholars accede that, there are thirty chapters of *Shah-Jo-Risalo*. Each sur (chapter) is entitled according to the subject discussed in the sur and each sur has a different theme or subject furthermore, each sur has divided into sections. The religious thought and Islamic traditions have been portrayed in each sur.

اول الله عليم، اعلى عالم جو ٿئي،
 قادر پنهنجي قدرت سين، قائم آهي قديم،
 والي، واحد، وحده، رازق رب رحيم،
 سو ساراه سچو ٿئي، چئي حمد حڪيم،
 ڪري پاڻ ڪريم، جوڙون جوڙ جهان جون.
 (سر ڪلياڻ)

The very first is Allah, He is omniscient.

Supreme and Lord of the universe

By His Divine might He exists since infinity

He is the Lord, one and only, fosterer.

Merciful and compassionate

Praise Him- The real Lord by reciting the admiring verses for Him

It is He, the compassionate who planned and perfected the universe.

(Munwar Arbab (Halo), p-17)

In these verses, Shah Latif praises the Almighty Allah that, He is the Lord of the whole universe, Supreme power, eternal existence, creator of piles of earth and skies, one and only one, etc. Furthermore, the poet gorgeously expresses the power of His existence and depicts the fundamental concept of Almighty Allah which is existence in every religion about God. This poem closely resembles with the explanation of Surah Al-Fathia and sur Kalyan¹⁸ is almost resembling with the first Surah of Holy Quran (Al-Fathia). In which the doctrine of the oneness of Allah and true and untrue paths have been elucidated.

وحده لاشريك له، اي هيڪڙائي حق،
 بيائي ڪي ٻڪ، جن وڏو سي ورسيا.
 (سر ڪلياڻ)

"Allah is unique and without a partner".

This is the testimony of His oneness.

Those who adhere to duality are the losers.

(Munwar Arbab (Halo), p-18)

In this piece of poetry, the poet articulates the doctrine of Tauheed (oneness of God) that, God is the only one, He does not have kith and kin, He is solely existence. These lines also resemble the verses of Surah Al-Akhlās (Quran) in which the oneness of God has been explicated. On the other side, those who follow the duality and do not believe in one God will off the right track and the punishment of this deed will be unpardonable. Allah says in the Holy Quran that all the sins can be pardoned except polytheism. Another similar verse addresses the oneness of God in this way.

وحده لاشريك له، ٻڌ نه پورا،
 ڪ تو ڪنين نه سءاء، جي گهٽ اندر گهوڙا،
 ڳاريندا ڳوڙها، جت شاهد ٿيندء سامهان.
 (سر ڪلياڻ)

Listen O' Deaf

"He is unique and without a partner"

Did your ears hear not?

the spiritual consciousness inside you?

You shall shed tears,

on the Day of Judgment,

when witnesses shall confront you.

(Munwar Arbab (Halo), p-19)

Once again, Shah Latif utters to his listeners (disciples) that, do you not hear that there is no God except Allah, do you not understand this secret of the inner self? But when you stand in front of God on the day of judgment then you will regret it. Moreover, the poet emphasizes that in all conditions you must have to recognize this concept of the oneness of God and never be resemble anyone to Him, if you do so then who will save you from the punishment of Allah. This brief statement in the above couplet shows the same message as given by Allah in the Holy Quran regarding the unity of God. Hence, the philosophy of the Quran and the message of Shah Latif are not much so disparate which is clearly explained that the oneness of God and the Sharia is very important principles to achieve the human prosperity.

¹⁸ First chapter of *Shah-Jo-Risalo*

وحدہ لاشریک لہ، چئي چوندو آء،
 فرض، واجب، سنتون، تنیون ترک م پاء،
 توبہ سندي تسبیح، پرھڻ ساڻ پچاء،
 نانگا! پنهنجي نفس کي ڪا سين لاه سونهاء،
 ته سندي دوزخ باھ، تو اوڏيائي نہ اچي۔
 (سر ڪلياڻ)

You should always recite and continue to recite:

"Allah is one and without partner"

Do not for sake, much less abandon, any category of
 Namaz,

Simultaneously offer repentance repeatedly on rosary.

O! (Ignorant man) put yourself on the straight path,

So that he flames of Hell may not approach you.

(M. Yakoob Agha, p-11)

In these lines, the poet emphasizes those people who relinquish the way of Allah and His Prophet (PBUH) and follow the path which has been proscribed. This time, Shah Latif threatens people as do by God-fearing men by giving reference to the fire of Hell that you should always remember that 'Allah is alone and has no partner' and repeat it continually, and never forget the Divine duties (prayers) which are granted by Allah. Moreover, to remember Allah by reading the rosary and at the same time offering penitence to ask for forgiveness of sins. To control the self-desires (nafs) is very difficult for common people because all the sins begin through this. Thus, Shah Latif insists more on controlling it because if it is controlled then the fire of Hell will be away from you. The poet takes a firm stand to obey the proscribed duties to get the will of Allah. This message of the poet is applicable for those people who are on the path of Satan (prohibited path).

وحدہ لاشریک لہ، جن اتو سین ایمان،
 تن مچیو محمد ڪارڻي، قلب ساڻ لسان،
 او فائق م فرمان، اوڻڙ ڪنهن نہ اولیا۔
 (سر ڪلياڻ)

Those who in lord's peerless Oneness believe,
 Accept Muhammad (PBUH) guidance, with heart and
 speech,

There is abode of bliss, for they abide God's decree,
 Never mislead are they to paths that dubious be.

(Dr Durreshahwar Sayed, p-13)

In this rhyme, Shah Latif admires the Prophethood of

Muhammad (PBUH) along with the Creator of oneness. In this chapter, the poet emphasizes more on the unity (oneness) of Allah because it is the first belief in Islamic doctrine to believe in one God and negation of all other lords. Therefore, those who believe in one God and heartedly accepted the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH), who becomes the cause of the creation of this world and owner of huge dignity, will never be out of the right path and achieve the massive succession by following this true path. This poem further reveals that if you claim to love Allah then you must love the last messenger (PBUH) of Allah by heart and if not do so then your claim to love Allah is baseless. Here, to love the last Prophet means to accept the program of the Prophet (PBUH) and follow it wholeheartedly. Similarly, the same message has been elaborated in Surah Al-Imran ayat number 31 by the holy Quran.

وحدت تان ڪثرت ٿي، ڪثرت وحدت ڪل،
 حق حقيقي هيڪڙو، ٻولي ٻي م پل،
 هو هلاچو هل، بالله سندو سچڻين۔
 (سر ڪلياڻ)

Unity to diversity led, diversity, unity's outcome,

Truth is one, be not forgetful of this,

I swear, existence tumulus glamour His reflection is.

(Dr Durreshwar Sayed, p-21)

Here, the poet expresses the next level of the oneness of God by saying, diversity comes from oneness and this diverseness is the oneness of God. It means, there is no God except Allah, and all the universe is created for His beloved Muhammad (PBUH). This perception of Shah is enough to analyze and understand the oneness of Allah and the cause of the creation of this universe. Another similar poem is said in this verse.

سو هي، سو هو، سو اجل، سو الله،
 سو پرين، سو پساھ، سو ويري، سو واهرو۔
 (سر ڪلياڻ)

He is this, He is that,

He is the destroyer, He is the creator,

He is the beloved, He is the breath,

He is the enemy; He is the saviour as well.

(Dr Durreshahwar Sayed, p-17)

Shah Latif explains the nature of Allah by saying that, Allah is present everywhere, here or there. He has created the universe and He will be destroyed it. He is also the foe as well as helper, friend, or ally so, Allah is everything. He is

the dearest, He is the lord of lords. Thus, there are several couplets that reflect the glory of God and His oneness in sur Kalyan¹⁹.

سوهي راه رد ڪري، سوهي رهنما،
وتعز من تشاء، و تزل من تشاء.
(سر ڪلياڻ)

He alone blocks the, He alone the direct,

He elevates whom He please, He degrade who wishes.

(Dr Durrehshahwar Sayed, p-61)

In these lines, Shah Latif uses a verse of Surah Al-Imran (Quran) which means He is the supreme in his decision, 'promote whomever He wants and humiliates whomever He would like'. Allah has superiority in each and everything. But Allah also says in the Quran that, 'your efforts will never go in vain'. Even, Allah does not ineffective the efforts of theft hence, never despair, this is what Allah has written in our destiny. Always do struggle for positive things as well as such things which become the cause of human prosperity.

جوڙي جو ڙ جهان جي، پاڻ ڪيائين نروار،
حامي، هادي، هاشمي، سردار ان سردار،
پنهجي صاحبن سٿ ۾، منجه مسجد مٿيادار،
چارئي چڱاچوڌار هيا، هيڪاندا حبيب سين.
(سر ڪلياڻ)

After harmonizing ideally, the conditions in the universe

Allah manifested Himself through the Prophet of Islam,

The helper and guide (to mankind), the scion of illustrious tribe of Hashemites, and the leader of Prophets (who preached and glorify the oneness and His unique attributes).

It fitted well with his position to be amidst his comrade in that auspicious mosque (at Madinah).

His four companions particularly were constantly with him.

(M. Yakoob Agha, p-115)

Shah Latif does not only glorify Allah and His uniqueness, but he also extols the last Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The poet very elegantly eulogizes the last and beloved Prophet of Allah in these lines. He says after the creation of this universe Almighty Allah explicates His beloved Prophet (PBUH) and makes him the leader of the leaders.

The Prophet was granted the compassions along with the propitious mosque at Madinah and four caliphates (close friends) who were always with him. The poet praises the creativity of Allah, the Prophethood of the last Prophet (PBUH), and his status among the Prophets, the guides, the Hashemite clan, and the partisans. In addition to, he discusses the companions (Sahaba) of the Prophet who directly learned from the Master in the shadow of mosque Nabvi and in last, the four caliphates who later spread Islam and accomplished one of the objects of the Prophet (PBUH) to defeat the atrocious power of Qaisar (Rome) and Qissra (Iran). The poet, furthermore, utters that the last Prophet (PBUH) is the most superior man among all the Prophets, companions, martyrdoms, Aulaya e Allah (friends of God), and all human beings. Similarly, Allah says in Surah Al-Ambiya that, 'Muhammad (PBUH) has sent to mercy for all the worlds'.

احد، احمد، پاڻ ۾، وچا ميم فرق،
آهي مستغرق، عالم انهيءَ ڳاله ۾.

There is little difference of 'mem' between Ahad (God) and Ahmad (Prophet),

The whole world is immersed in that concept.

In this couplet, the poet differentiates between God and His beloved Prophet (PBUH) and distinguishes us the position of the last Prophet (PBUH) is. Furthermore, the difference between Allah and His Prophet is just of 'mem' (M), it means the Prophet and His creator does not have much difference and this philosophy is not easily understood by this world. The poet tries to understand the broad concept of Allah and His affection for the last Prophet. To understand this philosophy of Lover (God) and beloved (Prophet) in which the world has immersed, the poet has described this in a very simple way in these above lines.

پڙهيو ٿا پڙهن، ڪڙهن ڪين ڪلوب ۾،
پاڻان ٿوه چڙهن، جيئن ورق ورائين وٿرا.
(سر يمن ڪلياڻ)

The learned once, page after page turn,

Their heart accepts not what they learn,

The more page they turn, the more they sin.

(Dr Durrehshahwar Sayed, p-173)

In this couplet, Shah Latif criticizes those scholars who have learned a lot but their hearts do not accept it, so as they more read they more move towards sins. Similarly, the religious scholars, no doubt, have massive knowledge regarding the religion but unfortunately, they emphasize more on that exercise which does not have direct relations to human prosperity. Thus, they only observe ostentatious

¹⁹ First chapter of *Shah-Jo-Risalo*

worship like fasting, praying, etc. but they never struggle for humanity, brotherhood, harmony, unity, etc. Therefore, Shah Latif's this couplet is entirely applicable nowadays. Because through these conservative religious guides, people exploit in the name of religion. These religious scholars instigate the people sometime in the name of *Jihad*²⁰ and sometimes in the name of the Islamic government. Moreover, the poet criticizes those who learn more but they do not act on it. Similarly, there is valueless the reading of thousands of books unless you act on that knowledge. Shah Latif's perception is that you should read a little on which you should act on it properly. The knowledge that does not control self-desires has no importance. According to the poet, such knowledge can be cause of a huge loss that cannot guide the path of humanity and goodness. Similarly, another couplet is related to this theme given below.

جنين جنين ورق ورائين، تنن تنن لئو ڏوه،
تنهن ڪهڻي ڪو ڪوه، جي رهي رهيو نه
سپرين.

(سر يمن ڪلياڻ)

The more leaves you aimlessly trun,
The more prone to sin you become,
If he himself abide not,
Of what you are guide's admonition.
(Dr Durreshahwar Sayed, p-175)

ان پر نه ايمان، جنن ڪلمي گو ڪوٺائين،
دغا تنهنجي دل ۾، شرڪ ۽ شيطان،
منهن ۾ مسلمان، اندر آذر آهنين.
(سر آسا)

You pose yourself as the reciter of Kalim
the faith is not like that
Your heart bears deceit, disbelief and Satan (evil)
By face you appear to be a believer
inside you are an idol worshipper.
(Munwar Arbab (Halo), p-115)

Being a Muslim is an easy task, but it is very difficult to be a true Muslim. In this verse, Shah Latif criticizes those who do not follow the real spirit of religion, and instead of it they make the shape of pious men to deceive the others. Alike, Shah Latif's period was a hierarchical span of

religious guides who exploit the masses in the name of spirituality but, indeed they oppressed their devotees. Resultantly, the poet condemns those religious scholars who created the monopoly with the state to vanquish the true or God-loving men like Sufi Shah Inayat Shaheed and Makhdoom Abdul Rehman. Thus, these deceivers are also found today where they look like pious men, apparently as very true Muslims having large bread, but they have betrayal from inside.

جان جان پسین پاڻ کي، تان تان ناھي سجود،
وڃائي وجود، تھان پوءِ تڪبير چئو.
(سر آسا)

So long as you are conscious of your "self"
your prostration to Allah is uncalled for
Wipe out all your egoism
and then offer your prayers.
(Munwar Arbab (Halo), p-64)

Shah Latif discourses about how to perform the prayers and what is required before going to in front of Allah (prayer). Thus, the poet provides the broad concept of prayer and its relation to egoism (self-centeredness). He says, first we have excluded the ego from inside and emancipate from it and then should go for prayer. Besides, do not go in front of your Lord (Allah) until you liberate from self-arrogance. Your worship is without benefit unless you eliminate your self-desires. Indeed, the true message of the prayer is also to abrogate the egoism and create harmony among the masses. On the other hand, the Quran says in Surah Al-Nahal that, 'the prayer prevents from immorality and denial'. But unfortunately, we neither follow this philosophy nor understand the message of Sufi saints, particularly Shah Latif. It is observed that the people have made the prayer as ceremonial deeds and have never focused on its real purpose. The collectivism, that should have developed from the prayer, does not develop after having the large gatherings of prayer.

روزا، نمازون، اي پڻ چڱو ڪم،
او ڪو ٻيو فھم، جنھن سان پسجي پرين ڪي.
(سر آسا)

Namaz and Fasting are indeed good deeds
but there is some other wisdom
by which to behold the Beloved.
(Munwar Arbab (Halo), p-69)

In this couplet, Shah Latif addresses how to get the will of God by pursuing such deeds by saying that, the performing of prayer and fasting are not enough to please God, but it is

²⁰ Holy struggle for the will of Allah

something else through which we can get the will of God. The poet responds to those narrow-minded who think that the Sufi poet does not follow the Sharia (Divine laws) for the sake of Allah's will consequently, he does retort that there is no way to please Allah but there are numerous methods through which it can be achieved the will of Allah. As it is said that Shah Latif used to play the music, which has prohibited in religion, along with his devotees thus, he also used to say, he finds comfort in listening to music to purify his soul. Therefore, the opponents of Shah had got this opportunity to blame Shah by taking this subject of listening to music, but it could not affect the gloriousness of the poet. On the other hand, this poem criticizes those who only emphasize fasting and praying but do not behave in a good manner to their relatives and others. And those who interpret the Divine laws and declare that fasting and praying is complete exercise to get the will of God. This poem also criticizes those religious leaders who only advise their followers to focus on fasting and praying only and do not convey the true message of religion, which was spread by Sufi saints whose mission is to get the will of God through different methods. No doubt, fasting and praying is an individual duty to every Muslim but besides it we must do such activities through which the people can liberate themselves from the curse of poverty, corruption, injustice, inequality, etc. So that, Shah Latif's message to please Allah is something else like, to serve the people, treat them well, to help them, to hide people's fault, to understand their compulsion as own compulsion, to struggle for human prosperity instead of race, color, creed, and religion.

ڪوڙو تون ڪفر سين، ڪافر نه ڪوٺاءِ،
هندو هڏ آهي، جڻيو تون نه جڳاءِ،
تلڪ تنهن کي لاءِ، سچا جي شرڪ سين.
(سر آسا)

You are reality not loyal to your faith,
Then why do you call yourself a Hindu,

This Holy thread around your neck does not be fit you,
Only those who are true to their faith possess the tight to
use religious symbol.

(G. M. Sayyid, p-44)

This verse shows that the poet does not only criticizes Muslims, who accept Islam by tongue only and follow the way of Satan, but also Hindus who do not loyal to their religion. As it is known that Shah Latif spent the three formative years of his life along with his non-Muslim companions and he never tried to convert them towards Islam. But he delivered the true message of religion to his non-Muslim friends. When he felt that his non-Muslim friends (Jogis and Sannyasin) do not follow their religion then Shah Latif strongly condemned them. Moreover, the

poet says, no matter you belong to which religion but you have to follow your religion by heart whether it is Islam or Hinduism. Therefore, Shah Latif has a strong message in terms of religion, regardless of any religion, it should be followed with peace of mind. So, those who understand that the message of Shah is only for Muslims they are erroneous because his message is universal and for all. Similarly, the poet condemns those who wear the clothes of religion to manipulate the oppressed people in the following verses.

منهن ته موسى جهڙو، سيرت ۾ شيطاني،
بازي بيڙا ئي، ڪڍي ڪو نه چڏين.
(سر آسا)

Your face is as pure as that of Moses
but the character is that of Satan

Why don't you throw
such worthless deceit from your inner self.

(Munwar Arbab (Halo), p-115)

Shah Latif addresses in this poem to prevent such people who hide their inner self with the help of religion or pious men (who look like as righteous). Today's society is a great example of such people who present everywhere to exploit religion for the sake of personal interests. Therefore, the image sketches by the poet in this poem is perfectly fitted to modern society because here most of the people are looking for opportunities to exploit the poor masses. Thus, the poet identifies such deceit people to prevent the poor masses. Moreover, he says people should have to pure their inner self instead of outer shape, which becomes the cause of oppressing of poor masses. If your inner self is unsullied then whatever your outside is, you will be succeeded. Alike, we spend millions of rupees on our outer beauty but never do such efforts to purify the inner beauty.

جن وڃائو وجود، سي فاني ٿيا في الله ۾،
نه تن قيام، نه قعدو، نڪو ڪن سجود،
جيلا ٿيا نابود، ٿيلا رسيا بود ڪي.
(سر آسا)

Those who succeed in self abnegation become mortal for
the sake of Allah

They carry out no prayer neither they bow in prostration
Nor do they sit or stand
In order to "be"
They had to negate their 'self'.

(Munwar Arbab (Halo), p-65-66)

Once more Shah Latif elucidates about egoism but, this time he reaches the next level of spirituality which will come after the abrogation of arrogance. In the previous couplet, the poet talks about the negative impacts of arrogance on the way of Allah but in the present lines, he expounds that what will happen when arrogance is completely abolished. He says, those who put an end to their arrogance and then meet to Almighty Allah then they neither have need to bow down nor they need to prostrate. Here the poet tries to address that vanity or arrogance is the barrier to getting the will of God, if you control it then you do not have a need to follow the Divine exercise. Here, Shah Latif is talking about the next level of understanding which is beyond the comprehension of ordinary masses to digest it. The poet is right in his thought because when the next stage is achieved, which has been accomplished by Sufi saints, then these things become minor, and people think about another next level to get more and more will of Allah. There are three stages to accomplish the spirituality first, you should get the complete companionship from the spiritual guide then get the closeness of Prophet (PBUH), annihilation in the love of Prophet, then in last to obtaining the closeness of Allah.

CONCLUSION

Consequently, Shah Latif addresses the religion in such a way that no one recognizes what the religion of Shah is. In fact, Shah was a true Muslim and he had practiced the sacred deeds of religion in true way moreover, he has quoted more than eighty verses of the Holy Quran and Ahadith, sayings of Prophet (PBUH) in his collection of Shah-Jo-Risalo that is why Makhdoom Abdul Rahim Girohri (d. 1788) says,

آهي عبداللطيف تي رضا مندو رحمان،
جوڙي جنهن قرآن، سنڌي ۾ صحيح ڪيو.

God is blessed with Abdul Latif,

Who translated the Quran in Sindhi.

Shah Latif also says regarding this subject in this way:

جي تون بيت پائيا، سي آيتون آهن،
نيو من لائين، پريان سنڌي پار ڏي.
(سر سهڻي)

What you consider to be verses are sign posts,

That direct your mind to Lord's abode.

(Saeed Ahmed Soomro Dr Mubarak Ali Lashari, p-23)

He used the word Islam once in his poetry and the term Hindu used the same throughout his whole poetry. He also condemns those Hindus who do not follow their religion by heart. He never preached Islam in front of his Hindu compassions because he had broad-minded and liberated

from conservatism, who forcibly imposed their religion on other communities. He acted on what he said. Therefore, the religious thought of Shah Latif is very valuable, and it can be applied everywhere because it is not specifically for Muslim society, his ideas can be suited for non-Muslim society to accomplish the will of Allah. It should be applied at the national level to improve the norms, values and create harmony and brotherhood among the Muslims as well as non-Muslims. If we want to pay homage to Shah Latif's message, then we must apply his message through over daily life by wholeheartedly for the sake of humanity and its well-being.

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